(e) the steps being taken to protect the interest of farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUM DEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) The prices of cotton in Gujarat have been ruling below the Minimum Support Price (MSP) during the current season and the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), a central nodal agency, has been continuously purchasing cotton from 29 procurement centres opened in the State of Gujarat and has procured a total quantity of 179011 bales of Cotton of 170kgs. each as on 18.2.2002. Further purchases are continuing.

(b) Information about amount of subsidy as percentage of cost, being paid by the developed countries like the United States of America, is not maintained.

(c) and (d) As regards "Rasta Roko Andolan" in Vidarbha area, farmers of the region had about 2 months ago, started agitation by blocking the road and rail transport demanding 100% payments against procurement of cotton under the Monopoly Purchase Scheme and insisted for opening of more procurement centres in Vidharbha and Marathawada regions.

(e) To protect the interest of cotton farmers the Government has (i) hiked import duty from 5% to 10% (effective from 9.1.2002) to restrain imports; (ii) fixed Minimum Support Price (MSP) for different varieties of cotton during each season and (iii) Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), a central nodal agency, is undertaking price support operation and has procured a total quantity of 6,42,048 bales (including MSO operations) in the major cotton producing States during the current season.

Bar on copra procurement by co-operative societies in Kerala

172. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some co-operative societies in Kerala were debarred from procurement of copra as they were charge-sheeted for involvement in corruption deals related to copra procurement;

(b) if so, the details thereof, alongwith the names of the societies;

(c) whether Government are aware that the State Government included these societies in the procurement area again; and

(d) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUM DEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the House.

Relief and rehabilitation of victims of Gujarat Earthquake

173. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian People's Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights, which inquired into the relief and rehabilitation work for Gujarat earthquake has passed severe strictures on the functioning of the Gujarat Government for its apathy and discrimination against the minority community in carrying out the relief and rehabilitation programme;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (c) Ministry of Agriculture have not received any such report. The distribution of relief on ground is the responsibility of the State Government.

Subsidy for wheat and paddy producing countries

†174. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that America and other wheat and paddy producing countries of the world are giving such amounts of subsidy for their agricultural produces which are violating the conditions prescribed by the World Trade Organization;

(b) if so, the details of Government's information in this regard;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.